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Presented is the transcript of a radio program on handicapped children in the classroom. Through interviews with students, teachers, parents, and state and local officials, the program touches on peer acceptance, teacher training, problems with mainstreaming, teacher concerns about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), parent rights, and the feelings and reactions of handicapped children. (CL)

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Program No. 97: "HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM"

November 7, 1977

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HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're reporting on a major change that's coming soon...

BLAIR: ...or may be here already...

MERROW: ...in our public schools.

BLAIR: John's talking about handicapped children, and about new federal legislation that has a lot of teachers and state education officials in a tizzy.

* * *

ONE HANDICAPPED STUDENT AND HOW OTHER STUDENTS FEEL ABOUT HER

YOUNG GIRL: ...I'm insane, and they've been calling me naughty names, and they've been calling me "retardo." They've been calling me retarded.

MERROW: Who has?

YOUNG GIRL: George.

MERROW: Well, you'd better tell me who George is.

YOUNG GIRL: He is a boy that...in our music room, and they been calling us names. So I told Mrs. Mathews, and Mrs. Mathews says, "Quit it, George."

MERROW: Why would George do that?

YOUNG GIRL: I don't know, I guess he likes to make fun of us.

MERROW: Well what did you think, tell me, when George called you "retardo?" What did you think?

YOUNG GIRL: That he's not nice, cause I don't think I have any friends in the music room.

MERROW: When you go to the music room, do you just go with your class here, or do you go with other kids too?

YOUNG GIRL: We go, we go with other kids and we go in the auditorium down stairs with Mrs. Mathews, and we go with other classes, and sometimes we just sing songs.

MERROW: What songs do you sing?

YOUNG GIRL: Oh, Halloween songs, "This is the Haunted House," you know, and stuff like that.

MERROW: Will, will you sing a little bit?

YOUNG GIRL: (Laughs) (Sings) This is the haunted house, it's old and it's creepy. (Laughs)

MERROW: That's great!

* * *

MERROW: That young girl is 13. She lives and goes to school in Iowa. She's classified as educable mentally retarded. She's doing school work at first or second grade level, working in a classroom with a teacher, an aide, and nine other educable mentally retarded children.

BLAIR: Those children don't spend very much school time with normal children. Recess and lunchtime is about the extent of their mingling. And, as she said, one boy, George, calls her retarded and "retarde."

MERROW: George throws stones at her too, she told me.

BLAIR: There's a question that now has to be asked about her, and about every other handicapped child in public schools: are they being educated in the "least restrictive environment?"

MERROW: That's right. Can an educable mentally retarded child have music class, for instance, with ordinary kids?

BLAIR: Or what about physically handicapped children? Is there any reason why a child in a wheelchair, or permanently on crutches, couldn't take science laboratory with all the other kids?

MERROW: "Least restrictive environment" is a key phrase, one you'll hear throughout this hour. It means, essentially, that handicapped children are to be treated as students first, as handicapped second, and educated as normally as possible.

BLAIR: "Mainstreaming" is another term that's often used interchangeably with "least restrictive environment," although they don't mean the same thing. "Mainstreaming" means putting the handicapped in with normal kids, but "least restrictive environment" recognizes that "mainstreaming" may not be the best thing for the handicapped child: that is, being with normal kids may not allow enough attention.

MERROW: But nearly everybody recognizes that "mainstreaming," to the extent that it's possible, is the goal of the federal legislation that's going into effect this year and next.

BLAIR: That brings us to another term you're going to hear more than a few times: "94-142," or "PL94-142," which refers to federal legislation -- The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. That law says that handicapped children are entitled to a "free and appropriate education."

MERROW: That sounds simple, but think back to that classroom of educable mentally retarded children -- a teacher and an aide for only ten children. That's expensive.

* * *

TEACHERS AND THE HANDICAPPED CHILD

ANDOLINA: You've got to re-connect the test lead you disconnected. With the switch closed and the bulbs all burning, unscrew any one of the bulbs several turns, and then answer the question after you do that.

STUART: Oh, ok. After I finish charging my batteries.

WOMAN: ...the classrooms are overburdened. They have a high student to teacher ratio, often times, then can't necessarily teach effectively, as it is to their regular students perhaps. And having a handicapped child in the classroom does take a lot of extra effort...

CHILD: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, W...

TEACHER: No, U...

CHILD: Ah, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z.

BLAIR: A severely and multiply handicapped child may require a teacher of his or her own, and that's even more expensive.

MERROW: Remember, the law says "free and appropriate." Free means the government can't charge the parents. Appropriate means the school must provide an educational opportunity that enables the child to achieve his or her full potential -- no matter what the cost.

BLAIR: "94-142" requires that the states find those handicapped children who are now unserved -- that is, not getting any special education -- and start serving them. "Priority number two," the law says, "is to find handicapped children who are now under-served, and serve them properly," too.

MERROW: How many kids are involved? Best estimates are one million unserved children, and four million under-served. There are about eight million handicapped children in all, which means that only three million handicapped kids are getting adequate treatment, as it stands now.

BLAIR: "94-142" establishes 14 separate classifications of handicaps, from physically handicapped to emotionally disturbed to educable and trainable mentally retarded.

MERROW: The writers of the law, and its supporters, make the point that while there are lots of classifications and types of handicaps, children with handicaps are more like normal children than not. And as we shall see, that's part of their rationale for "mainstreaming": so we'll all get to know each other and stop being scared of what we don't know.

BLAIR: Very few people will object to the policy of a fair shake for handicapped children, but an awful lot of people involved at state and local levels are more than upset about "94-142" because of money, or rather the lack of it.

MERROW: You see, the Congress hasn't done what it often does with new legislation: that is it hasn't sweetened the blow with a pot full of cash. It has said, simply, do these things, and it has authorized very little money to pay for them.

BLAIR: The National Education Association -- the teachers' union -- is one of the organizations that's upset. It estimates that the federal government will be providing only \$70 per handicapped child...

MERROW: ...which is not very much at all! Especially considering that schools spend \$1,388 per child. Seventy dollars more is peanuts!

BLAIR: The NEA says its members -- that is classroom teachers -- are scared because they're not trained to teach the handicapped. John talked with NEA President John Ryor.

TEACHERS LACK TRAINING IN TEACHING THE HANDICAPPED

RYOR: One of our frustrations with "94-142" is that there is no front money for re-training teachers to deal with handicapped children. We vigorously supported that legislation. We think it's important. But our expectation was that they were going to do something with teachers who had no skill for dealing

with hard of hearing, sight problems, physical problems, an autistic child, special education, mentally handicapped, whatever the case. We have many, many teachers who haven't the foggiest notion of what the problems are about, because that is never part of the general education in the colleges and universities of education in this country. And that's what we're, that's what concerns us most, and that's what our teachers are most concerned about.

MERROW: So what you'd like then, is some, the legislation amended in some way to include money and time for training teachers, not necessarily more teachers?

RYOR: Absolutely! I think...training the teachers who are in the classrooms now. I'm talking about...if we're talking about giving all handicapped children an opportunity in a normal classroom setting, much like the world they're going to live in, then we've got to do something as well with the teachers who are expected to deal with those problems.

BLAIR: John Ryor, President of the National Education Association, at the NEA Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ryor expressed the fear that school districts would, in an effort to save money, "mainstream" all handicapped children, and fire special education teachers, leaving regular teachers to teach all children.

MERROW: While we haven't heard of that happening, anywhere, we have heard of places where teachers are up in arms because school boards, when they do order "mainstreaming" aren't recognizing that a handicapped child may require much more attention than a normal child.

BLAIR: Teachers want their school boards to count each handicapped child as two children, or two and a half, or four, when figuring class size, so teachers would have more time to give the handicapped student.

MERROW: That's going to be an issue in teacher union contract talks across the country, we're told.

PREPARATION NEEDED TO TEACH THE HANDICAPPED

WOMAN: Any teacher--a teacher of regular kids, or handicapped kids--has to be concerned with individual progress, best educational environment for each individual child. And in order to accomplish that in any classroom where handicapped children will be introduced, we may need to do some training of teachers to give them the skills to approach each child as an individual who learns in a unique fashion.

MERROW: For the past several weeks, we've had a number of reporters talking with those who teach the handicapped. Reporter Audrey Barton talked with that teacher, and quite a few more, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Severely and Profoundly Handicapped in San Francisco, recently. Here's what they told her about teaching the handicapped.

WOMAN: This is child repulsive to the teacher. If that child is, chances are he's going to be ignored. And I really agree that unless these teachers have received training as to how to cope with a child who's handicapped or a child who's disruptive, or a child who's gifted, or whatever the case is, then you tend to shy away just because of inexperience, or "I don't know how to handle that situation."

MAN: Looking at it from the standpoint of a teacher, the preparation of preparing me to handle handicapped children in my classroom would be essential. I...there are several ways that one might go about that--having a tutor come in with that child, having courses that I can take to prepare myself

for eventual handicapped children in my classroom -- but having that preparation so that I feel comfortable with that, that child in my classroom. Because if you don't feel comfortable with that, obviously you're not going to be able to meet that child's needs, or feel comfortable with what you're doing with that child.

MERROW: Those teachers of the severely handicapped talked with reporter Audrey Barton in San Francisco.

BLAIR: But those teachers are trained to work with handicapped children. Most teachers just haven't had that kind of training. Barton also talked with the Director of the San Francisco school Program for the Handicapped, Dr. Martin Davis. He told her that hearing impaired, visually handicapped, and even some emotionally disturbed children are being "mainstreamed" wherever possible. But again, regular teachers' lack of training has been the big problem.

ONE PROBLEM WITH 'MAINSTREAMING'

DAVIS: There have been some problems with regular classroom teachers, since they are fearful of the handicapped, not understanding the problems as well as the abilities of the handicapped. And, therefore, we have had to spend a great deal of time assisting regular classroom teachers in understanding the scope and the ability of the handicapped, and to work with him effectively in the regular classroom. That, probably, has been the most serious problem.

On occasion, there's too much empathy for the child who is handicapped, and they tend to treat the handicapped instead of the ability, or the youngster as a whole.

BLAIR: Dr. Martin Davis, Director of the program for educating the handicapped in the San Francisco public schools, talking with reporter Audrey Barton.

MERROW: "Too much empathy," I heard that same complaint from a seventh grader in Des Moines, Iowa. Brent Anderson has spinal bifida, which means that he'll be on crutches for the rest of his life. He's going to school for the first time, and I asked him what the first day was like.

ONE STUDENT TALKS ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC SCHOOL

ANDERSON: Terrifying!

MERROW: How?

ANDERSON: Oh, just getting from class to class, and just adjusting from a school for other handicapped students to a school with students that aren't handicapped.

MERROW: Tell me about the teachers.

ANDERSON: What do you mean?

MERROW: Well, I guess I'd like to know how teachers treated you.

ANDERSON: Oh, they treated me like just any other student.

MERROW: They did?

ANDERSON: Except for one.

MERROW: Tell me about that.

ANDERSON: They went on a tour of the school, and they went in the basement to show the heating system to all the other students, and it was downstairs. And the teacher thought I couldn't walk down the stairs. Well, at the same time, I had classes on the second floor, so I'd been up...I have walked up and down the stairs two or three times a day just to get to other classes.

MERROW: So I guess what bothered you was the teacher assuming that you couldn't make it, when in fact you could make it?

ANDERSON: Yes.

MERROW: If you could give some advice to teachers, Brent, what would you tell them about how to treat children who do have physical handicaps?

ANDERSON: Just let them do what they think they can...what they think their ability will let them do.

BLAIR: Brent Anderson, a physically handicapped seventh grader, who's going to school with normal children for the first time this year, in Des Moines, Iowa.

MERROW: I talked with Brent at a hearing conducted by the National Education Association, one of three the NEA is holding around the country. The union wants to hear from teachers, parents, students, and administrators about the new law. It's gathering evidence, which it expects will support its push for either changes in the law, or--what the NEA would prefer--more federal money.

BLAIR: One of the law's requirements which has the NEA and a lot of other educators upset, is the IEP, the Individualized Education Plan, which "94-142" requires for every handicapped student.

MERROW: At first, educators were upset about the IEP because they didn't know what it was. Then Washington announced that parents had to be involved in every step of drawing up the IEP; and that if the parents didn't agree, they could go to court to get it changed. Administrators and teachers protested that writing, and possibly re-writing, these IEPs would create a mountain of paperwork and eat up a lot of their time.

BLAIR: Well, Washington heard their outcry and changed the requirement somewhat, so now parents don't HAVE to be involved every step of the way, but they still must be brought in, and they still must either approve the plan, or they have the right to a hearing.

MERROW: I found a lot of confusion in Iowa, a state which, incidentally, has had its own handicapped education law for more than two years. Robert Meier is President of the local teacher union, The Heartland Education Association. He also works directly with 17 teachers who are in the process of writing IEPs, and who, he said, are upset about the extra work.

TEACHERS COMPLAIN ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

MEIER: When you have 18 students in and out of the classroom all day--as a learning disabilities teacher, or a resource room teacher might have--you would be writing probably five or six objectives towards a given goal--like reading, for example, word attack skills, comprehension, speed, and so on--in identifying the areas, in the testing, in the writing of objectives. I would say that it would probably amount, in time, to maybe two hours for each child.

MERROW: When you say in time, you mean over a week, over a day, or...?

MEIER: Well, we like to sit down and go over one child completely, and two hours might be an exaggeration, but multiplied by 18, it adds up.

MERROW: So, you're talking now about a teacher spending with...a special ed teacher with 18 kids spending 36 hours between September 1 and January 1?

MEIER: Yes, and then this, these goals are to be updated continuously, which is expected, maybe four times a year.

MERROW: You mean to say that in the past the requirement has been that a teacher doesn't have to do any kind of individual plan? I know it's in the federal law, but you mean to say that a local school district, hiring a special ed teacher and helping develop curriculum wouldn't require that every handicapped kid be subject to some kind of special individual analysis?

MEIER: No, I believe that we have always programmed for the individual needs of the students. It's just that the law has mandated that we must put this in writing, and it's an additional burden.

MERROW: I, I'm, I'm a little bit, a little bit stunned to hear you complain about 36 hours of paperwork between September 1 and January 1 as an onerous burden on teachers.

MEIER: This is the response that I've been getting from the teachers that I've worked with.

MERROW: What's your response?

MEIER: I feel that it is useful. Several of my teachers have been reacting favorable. They can see that it keeps them on task, it gives them direction, and it serves as something to work from.

BLAIR: Robert Meier, union local president, and local teacher consultant on the handicapped in Des Moines, Iowa.

MERROW: Terri Arndt teaches handicapped children at Phillips Elementary School in Des Moines. Her students -- ages six, seven and eight -- are educable mentally retarded; she has seven students in all. She told me about the individualized education plan she's been working on, and about parental involvement in the process.

ONE TEACHER TALKS ABOUT HER OBJECTIONS TO THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

ARNDT: There is no child in my room who has the exact same plan, although parts of the plan may be the same as other students. And I do write up a plan for each individual student -- by law -- and we have been doing it for three years.

MERROW: You've been doing it for three years because of the Iowa law. You did it this fall, though, because of the "PL94-142." Correct?

ARNDT: Right.

MERROW: And you, the parents participated?

ARNDT: Not as well as I had expected.

MERROW: But they, they signed it?

ARNDT: I have been able to get three out of seven signatures.

MERROW: Does that mean four parents are objecting, or you just haven't been able to...?

ARNDT: I have one parent who wants me to come to the home, and I just haven't had the time to do it yet, and she just says she can't get to the classroom. I have two parents I haven't been able to get a hold of, and the fourth, who does refuse to become involved.

MERROW: Refuses to become involved? Tell me why.

ARNDT: I really don't know. The parent...I've talked to her on the phone twice about getting together to discuss the IEPs, and she just says she's too busy and she doesn't want to and she isn't going to sign anything. And she just, just doesn't want to become involved.

MERROW: Do you find doing an IEP an onerous task, a heavy, too heavy an obligation with too much paperwork?

ARNDT: Yes and no. It's a good...it's good, but yes, it's overburdening.

MERROW: How is it overburdening?

ARNDT: It places a lot of responsibility on a teacher's time. I have not been home for the last month until 5:30. I have a three-year-old daughter who needs me! Also, the time involved in calling parents, and getting them together; and I finally get a parent together, and she stays for an hour and fifteen minutes. That's a lot of time! Plus, the time involved in formally testing the kids, deciding what kind of annual plan you're going to work up, and then sitting down and working on the objectives. There is a lot of time involved. It is a good idea, but something needs to be done about the teacher time involved. Either the teacher needs more release time to work on such things, or there needs to be an aide in the classroom to help, so that the teacher can have some sort of time to evaluate and write down, or some extra conference days.

MERROW: You said a lot of time, and then again, you said a lot of time, and a lot of time, and once you talked about a parent staying an hour and fifteen minutes. But, when you say a lot of time to develop the plan, how much time are you talking about?

ARNDT: All right. The student comes in your room, you must informally evaluate that child in the areas of pre-reading, reading, math, handwriting, and so on, decide what his needs are. You must then sit down and decide what kind of annual plan you're going to work up for that child, all right. It's going to take you three or four days to test the child.

MERROW: But you have to do the testing anyway. Any good teacher...

ARNDT: Oh yes!

MERROW: ...does some kind of pre-testing no matter what.

ARNDT: Oh yes!

MERROW: So the only thing that the law is asking of you is that you sit down and work this out on paper. I don't understand why...

ARNDT: And, and call the parents in four times a year. Four times a year, we have to involve our parents -- which is good. A normal classroom teacher involves her parents twice a year, during conference time.

MERROW: But I don't understand the complaint ther. If it's an extra 24 hours, or 36 hours over the course of a school year, what's the big deal? Why are you asking for extra time off?

ARNDT: Like I said, above all else, we have to plan for our teaching, and to me, that is the most important thing. And when I have to stop planning for my teaching, to plan more writing and calling in parents, and talking to parents, and explaining to parents -- if each parent came in for an hour and fifteen minutes -- that's taking away from my planning time, that's taking away from the time that I need to plan to teach these kids, that I could make materials, make games, make bulletin boards.

MERROW: You know, you're an interesting contradiction because you're complaining about parents who don't answer your phone calls, who won't get involved, and on the other hand, you're at the other end of that spectrum, you're complaining about parents who come in and get too involved, who stay too long.

ARNDT: Ah, true, true. (Laughs) There's a fine line. The reason the parents are staying so long is because they want, they ask me questions that I feel should have been answered a long time ago. I'm not, I'm not complaining, because the law is a good law. It is very good, very beneficial for all that is involved. But something has to be worked out so that it can be more workable for the teacher, and help the teacher. I would like to see some kind of plan worked out so that the teacher can operate smoothly through the whole thing.

MERROW: Terry Arndt, a teacher of educable mentally retarded children in Des Moines, Iowa.

BLAIR: Parental involvement, whether in IEPs, or anything else, is something a lot of educators are ambivalent about. They want to need parental support, but they don't want parents looking over their shoulders all the time. It's generally accepted that parents of handicapped children are, as a group, more aware and more involved than most parents.

MERROW: Now, with the new law, some educators fear that parents are going to be suing the schools over the IEPs, or going to be demanding services the schools can't afford.

BLAIR: Only time will tell whether those things will happen. Meanwhile, there's also a question about how much parents know about the new law, and their rights under it. Pat Sterley, the father of a seven-year-old handicapped child, says that parents have to be educated.

PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN NEED TO BE EDUCATED REGARDING THEIR RIGHTS

STERLEY: Some of the attitudes that parents demonstrate are fear, are fear for their children to be ridiculed, to be misunderstood, to be mistreated, to be inappropriately placed, to be lost in the crowd. The concern, of course, is that for many years their children have been housed with only other handicapped children. They've been placed off into segregated centers, or into church basements, or into dilapidated facilities that non-handicapped kids would never have moved into. All of a sudden, we start looking and discovering that we're losing out something by being placed into the basement, being placed away from other children. And we're changing that, and feeling that we should be in that new building with the non-handicapped kids.

BLAIR: Pat Sterley, the father of a seven-year-old handicapped child, talking with reporter Audrey Barton in San Francisco.

MERROW: The parents are crucial to the new law, according to Bill Brown

of the National Association of State Boards of Education. Reporter John O'Rourke talked with Brown.

BILL BROWN

BROWN: We're going to get into a time, or a need, for parent education, as well as, as child education; where parents are going to have to be not only told their rights, but they're going to have to be knowledgeable about appropriate educational programming. I think, though, beyond that of, of parents enforcing the rights of children, what we are talking about is a change of attitude by our whole society in viewing the handicapped as not being one that needs to be segregated, but one that can be productive if their needs are, are adequately met. And I see that, that without this change in societal attitude, that a lot of the, the mandates of "142" will go unfulfilled; and it's going to be a hard process of taking people who have stereotypes about the handicapped persons, and changing their attitudes so they can view these people as possibly productive.

BLAIR: Bill Brown, of the National Association of State Boards of Education, talking with John O'Rourke in Washington.

MERROW: Brown also told reporter O'Rourke that some regular programs are being cut to meet requirements to educate the handicapped. He specifically mentioned Rhode Island as one place where cuts are being made.

Reporter John Watson, of member station WAMC in Albany, New York, learned recently about another problem parents have had in the past: a reluctance to identify their own children as handicapped for fear of the stigma involved.

BLAIR: Watson spoke with Jim Purcell, the Albany area director of a program called "Child Find," the purpose of which is to locate handicapped children, so that they may receive the appropriate school services. New York created "Child Find" to meet the requirements of the new federal law, "94-142."

THE SEARCH TO LOCATE HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

PURCELL: We still have many people who -- myself, for example -- grew up in an era when you never saw handicapped children, or retarded children. They were kept, as you said, cloistered or hidden. Parents growing up in an environment like that would need supportive assistance from either outside agencies, or within their own family, or within some part of their environment, that would allow them to recognize that the child's needs could be best served by being in a program, and not by being kept home, or by avoiding public education, or any education.

BLAIR: Jim Purcell of "Child Find," a program to locate handicapped children, talking with John Watson of member station WAMC, Albany, New York.

MERROW: An awful lot of parents of handicapped children aren't at all shy and retiring. In fact, they form an effective lobby in Washington through the Council for Exceptional Children, and in state capitals in most states.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO AND NOW

HENDERSON: We started 25 years ago in this state to try to get children into public school programs. And we had to get down on our knees and practically beg for any little thing that you could get. Parents started programs of their own: they operated classrooms until they could get them into the public school programs.

BLAIR: Helen Henderson isn't a typical parent of a handicapped child, but neither is her story all that unusual. Her twin daughters were born handicapped -- one retarded, the other with epilepsy--over 30 years ago. As her children neared school age, Henderson became concerned, and then involved. Today, she is state President of the Association for Retarded Citizens in Iowa.

MERROW: She testified at the hearings sponsored by the National Education Association in Des Moines recently, and I spoke with her about her children, and the schools.

HENDERSON: These girls are twins, and the one girl, when they were ready to start to kindergarten, could go to kindergarten -- a girl who now has later as a result of having encephalitis, now has epilepsy -- but she could go to public school. The other girl, who had had brain damage due to lack of oxygen when she was born, couldn't participate, and so she had to go to a program, in a resident program. The daughter who went to the public school, each year we worked very hard with the school people to try to develop an individual plan for her, and tried to take advantage of the resources that were available within the community so that she, indeed, could have an education. The other girl, really, her educational program was just sort of catch as catch can...

MERROW: You're talking about the retarded child?

HENDERSON: The retarded child who was in the resident school, because, well nobody thought, really, she could really learn very much. However, she can read a newspaper, she does... can learn and should have learned more. The interesting thing about it is is that the Department of Public Instruction did assume some responsibilities to see that the one girl, who went to the public school, had... that those programs met some kind of standards. The standards weren't really very good, but they had some responsibility for her education.

But for the other girl, who went to the institutional setting, they didn't feel any responsibility to see that the educational program for her met any kind of standards. Now, "94-142" really speaks to that. They say that, that law says that the Superintendent of Public Instruction in our state now has a responsibility for not only those children who go to the public school who are handicapped, but those who are in institutions: such as the school for the deaf, the blind, the retarded and so forth. Now, I'm very pleased to know about that. It's too late for my daughter because she's 31 years old, but for other children coming up, I'm very pleased about that.

MERROW: Now let's draw a scenario for children coming up. Suppose there were twins born under the same circumstances but were ready for school right now. What would happen?

HENDERSON: Oh, they'd both go to public school. There'd be no problem about that now. My, our Janie, who went to a resident school, she could go to the public school program now. There'd be no problem at all.

MERROW: Helen Henderson of the Iowa Association for Retarded Citizens. I spoke with her in Des Moines recently. She told me that she thinks school officials will use the hearing part of the IEP process to frighten and otherwise intimidate parents, by bringing in 10 or 15 school officials to look official and speak "educationese," and thereby frighten the parent--who's there all alone--into agreeing to the IEP that the school has drawn up.

BLAIR: As we mentioned earlier, OPTIONS IN EDUCATION asked several reporters around the country to talk with children, parents and teachers. Cathy Lewis in Rochester, New York, found one parent who wasn't intimidated. As a result, her son, who's deaf, has been "mainstreamed" for six years.

ONE PARENT TALKS ABOUT HER FIGHT FOR HER DEAF CHILD

ANDOLINA: If you were to observe Stuart in the hall, or in the classroom, you wouldn't know that he was handicapped, you wouldn't know that he had a hearing problem.

STUART: Sometimes they ask me, "How does it feel like -- being deaf?", "How does it feel like having a hearing aid on?" They ask me a lot of questions about my handicap, which I don't really call a handicap now. I feel like, I feel much like, you know, other kids.

LEWIS: Stuart Slutzky is profoundly deaf. He attends the seventh grade at Berger Junior High School in the Rush Henrietta District outside Rochester. Stuart has been "mainstreamed" here for six years as a result of a New York State law similar to the Federal Education for All Handicapped Act. Marcia Slutzky, Stuart's mother, felt that her child would do better in public school, though it had been suggested that Stuart be placed in a school for the deaf. In order to succeed, however, he needed an expensive mechanism called an auditory trainer. Mrs. Slutzky said the district agreed with her request, but would not have come up with the money for the item had she not asserted her rights under the law.

MRS. SLUTZKY: It was suggested that we write letters to the charitable organizations in town, and see if they could come up with the \$1,000 or \$1,500 to purchase this. Two of the organizations said they would love to. Mr. Mutschler got back to us and suggested we follow it up, and we said that it's not their responsibility; we were not in need of it financially. We felt that it was the school's responsibility, as had been mandated by the law at the state of New York, that the district pick up the money for it.

We waited him out. It was about a year. It was worth it. We finally -- after being very graceful and very much the lady and gentleman -- my husband finally applied pressure and threatened Mr. Mutschler with a class action suit unless he purchased the auditory trainer. Within 15 minutes, the money had been found.

LEWIS: Parental advocacy is the key to "mainstreaming": that is, according to attorney Phil Silver. He says the only difference between the New York State law and the new federal act is that the federal law calls for the least restrictive atmosphere for a handicapped child. The state law does not mandate this and, therefore, if the district does not have the proper program, they can place the handicapped child elsewhere. In that respect, the Rush Henrietta District was ahead of its time.

MRS. SLUTZKY: Rush Henrietta, we have found, is so far-thinking in working with handicapped children in the school system. They are one of the least restrictive atmospheres.

LEWIS: How does "mainstreaming" work? To find out, I went to school with Stuart. I sat in on his science class, where his teacher was Anthony Andolina.

STUART SLUTZKY AND HIS TEACHER

ANDOLINA: You've got to re-connect the test lead, you disconnected. With the switch closed and the bulbs all burning, unscrew any one of the bulbs several turns, and then answer the question after you do that.

STUART: Oh, ok. After I finish charging my batteries.

ANDOLINA: Yes.

LEWIS: Mr. Andolina has been teaching for 14 years. Stuart is the first handicapped child in any of his classes. I asked him if Stuart receives the most attention, and how that changes his classroom procedures.

ANDOLINA: I don't think I devote more time to him. I may, it may have seemed that way today. He asked a few questions, and therefore, he had more of my attention than probably some of the others did, but I like to move around so that I don't give all my attention to one person. I think when Stuart has my attention, I try to be very direct with him, I try to get his full attention. And actually, in this class, I will say this, and it will seem as though Stuart gets most of it, because when I give a direction, I like to face him, I like to talk directly to him. The others don't have to see me in order to hear me. Stuart does.

LEWIS: All of Stuart's teachers at Berger -- handpicked by his mother -- received a few days of training before school opened. They were taught how to use the auditory trainer, an amplification device worn around one's neck enabling Stuart to pick up sounds from the teacher, even if he is across the room. I asked Stuart what he thought of "mainstreaming." Is he better off here, in public school, than in the school for the deaf?

STUART: Yeah.

LEWIS: Why?

STUART: Well, with the help of my mother...she has every right to make me come into a public school. Every other person has rights. And she...without my mother, I wouldn't...I would be in RIT. But this is the right school. I have teachers who understand my feelings, and I have teachers who understand my deafness, and understand me. Well, I feel more comfortable in a public school.

LEWIS: This is Cathy Lewis, in Rochester.

MERROW: We also sent reporter Scott Simon back to school. He went to Shurz High School in Chicago, and spent the day with Cindy Apostle, a 16-year-old who has a learning disability.

A CHICAGO YOUTH TALKS ABOUT HER HANDICAP

TEACHER: Before the arrival of Cortes on Mexico, did the Spanish have any control of that area? Did they have any control...

SIMON: At Shurz High School on Chicago's west side, a class in Latin American history is being conducted, and it's at that point in the proceedings where eyelids are being lifted only to keep count of the moments remaining until the class bell rings. One of the students is Cindy Apostle, 16 years old.

(CLASS BELL RINGS -- STUDENTS LEAVE)

SIMON: She's dressed in the sort of way that many west side high school girls seem to -- mostly: blue jeans and a dark blue hooded sweatshirt. Where she differs from most of her classmates is that Cindy Apostle is technically classified as a handicapped child, who suffers a learning disability that makes it difficult for her to distinguish the proper order of letters, numbers, and symbols.

Do you ever have a sense of just being different from the other people in school?

APOSTLE: Yeah. I just, I feel like...I don't like to voice my opinion,

cause I feel like I'll say something wrong, and I'll regret it. So, I just keep my mouth shut.

SIMON: But I mean, but a lot of people say something wrong, and that never stops them from voicing their opinion again. And you kind of feel particularly on the spot or something for your...?

APOSTLE: Yeah, I feel a little like I did something wrong, and I shouldn't have, and it would have been better if I'd just keep my mouth closed.

SIMON: What probably upsets her more, though, is that she needs to compete practically with her fellow students in the classroom, but lacks many of those simple skills necessary. She cannot read easily, for example, or recollect what she reads very well; and she needs to have most of that recorded and played back to her. The result is that her grades often suffer.

APOSTLE: I know it's my disability that's holding me back, cause I just can't catch on to things so fast. And it sort of gets me puzzled, cause I try so hard to get it, and I just can't get it. And a couple of times, I come home so mad, that I just sit down and I cry over it, because I know I try so hard, and I just can't get it!

SIMON: You'd have to come away from several hours spent with Cindy Apostle, judging that what ever difficulty she has in attending a large, polyglot, forbidding, and probably under funded Chicago public high school, she seems comfortable within it. It's a sense of her value in that world, and of her value as a friend in that world to many others. Whatever the difficulties the school may have in providing her with the time and support she needs there, it's the feeling of its principal, James Maloney, that that's precisely what a decent and dedicated public school ought to be doing.

MALONEY: I think for students with disabilities, this type of school is often times a good one. We have a multi-racial situation, a multi-ethnic situation, a multi-economic situation. These kids are used to a little bit of everybody, and this is what the world is all about. Our kids are very -- not liberal, I don't want to use that particular word -- but they're almost unconscious of people who have handicaps. They don't pay particular attention to them, either to poke fun at them, or anything else. They're just there, they're part of what the world is all about.

SIMON: At Shurz High School in Chicago, this is Scott Simon reporting.

'SKIN EDUCATION'

MERROW: I also spent a day in classes for handicapped children, but with kids who aren't "mainstreamed." They go to regular schools, but stay in special classes. Some Iowa educators call this "SKIN education": that is, special classes with integration.

Mark, for example, is 12. He goes to Stillwell Junior High School, in West Des Moines, and he's what's known as emotionally handicapped. He's a problem in the classroom. A few years ago, he might have simply been labelled a bad kid, or incorrigible, and kicked out of school.

BLAIR: But Mark, and nine other emotionally disabled students, go to school. They have a teacher and an aide, and their classroom is run on a system of rewards and punishments: green tickets for doing assignments, and tallies for misbehaving -- that is, standing up on the desk, or calling out and so forth. Green tickets may cancel out the tallies, and the one with the most green tickets can get the prize at the weekly auction.

MERROW: The prize may be dinner at the local fast food joint, with the teacher, Bonnie Tucker, and that's a big treat. Mark told me how the system works, and how he's doing.

MARK: It's complicated to a person out on the outside, but this class is just so simple to me, but it's so hard to you you can't imagine it.

MERROW: Yeah? Well, it looks like you're rich, I see you've got a huge pile of green tickets.

MARK: Yeah.

MERROW: What will you use the green tickets for? I know there's an auction, tell me about that.

MARK: Well, the auction at the end of the week? Well, we'll get all of our teammates together, and then we'll keep on bidding down and down and down.

MERROW: For what?

MARK: And whoever gets out, for the prizes, you can go out to lunch to MacDonald's!

MERROW: Oh, is that right?

MARK: Yeah! You can go out to eat breakfast, you can go out to all sorts of places.

MERROW: Do you go by yourself, or with a teacher, or what?

MARK: With the teacher, she spends.

MERROW: Oh, is that right? She, she buys? Ok! So it's the number of tickets: in other words, you might bid 20 tickets for a lunch at MacDonald's, somebody else bid 21, and you might bid 22, that kind of thing?

MARK: Uh huh. Yeah. It's a lot like that.

MERROW: I hope you win the auction, I hope you win MacDonald's.

MARK: Ok, I will!

MERROW: Thanks Mark.

MARK: Bye.

BLAIR: Mark, a 12 year-old emotionally handicapped child, at Stillwell Junior High School in West Des Moines Iowa.

MERROW: Most of the parents we've talked to, or heard about don't love their children any less, because they're handicapped. Most parents of handicapped children recognize the fact that their children will grow up and leave school someday. They want their kids to get the most out of school they can, which for many of them, means "mainstreaming."

BLAIR: At the beginning of this program, we mentioned that many educators were extremely upset when "94-142" -- the Education of All Handicapped Children Act -- became law in 1975. The regulation spelling out the nuts and bolts of how the law would operate, caused great concern as well.

MERROW: Some states were upset because they felt they were already doing a good job, better than "94-142" requires, and that the federal government was just making paperwork. Among these states were Minnesota, Iowa, Connecticut, and California.

BLAIR: Other states felt the federal government was intruding in education, an area left by the Constitution to the states. For them, it's a state's rights issue.

MERROW: But whatever the objection or concern, just about everyone turned their attention to Massachusetts, which had a few years earlier, enacted a state law similar to "94-142." The Massachusetts law is known as Section 766, or simply "766."

BLAIR: Tom Looker has a report on the impact of "766": that is, on the education of the handicapped in Massachusetts.

MASSACHUSETTS: A STATE AHEAD OF ITS TIME

MAN: I think that Massachusetts should stand real tall. You know, we've come 80% - 85% of the way. The last 15% is tough, but it's so encouraging, we now know that this can work, and we're going to make it work.

LOOKER: In the three years of its existence, Massachusetts special education law, Chapter 766, has created some controversy. The main problem has been money.

MAN: Tax payers' associations have begun to complain. The only stance we can use right now, is this is federally and state mandated services. And we hide behind it, but that's the only thing that's really keeping us at the level of service that we have.

WOMAN: For many, many years, we did not give additional support to these children, and we are now paying for that neglect by having and maintaining large state institutions where these people are now located. We did not develop community resources that were cost effective, and also dealt with the quality of life. Those are the issues that, I feel, we have to speak to morally.

MAN: There's no question that "766" is an absolute must, not only from a human point of view, but also from a financial point of view. It's much less expensive to do the job here in the community than it is in our old state institution. And it is certainly more humanitarian than official to the individual's concern.

LOOKER: In spite of the severe financial problems of the special education law, a great deal has been accomplished in Massachusetts in a relatively short period of time. And there is a certain amount of pride in the state concerning "766," particularly when contrasted with the rest of the country. Since 1974, the number of students in special education programs in Massachusetts has doubled, now totalling about 160,000 children. Even the most severely handicapped students have been brought into the public school system, and as much as possible, integrated into regular school life. An important feature of the Massachusetts law is its avoidance of categories for special needs children. Handicapped students are not to be stigmatized with labels, not shunted aside into hermetically sealed programs. Local school districts have built up their own special educational resources, sometimes doubling the number of special teachers, counselors and therapists on their staffs; or they've joined with other school districts to form special education collaboratives. Many of the mechanisms which are part of Federal Law 94-142

are already in place in Massachusetts, and for the most part, they're working effectively. In particular, the state-wide bureaucracy set up to monitor the law and help local school districts with their special education programs, appears to be functioning surprisingly well. It's even ready to learn from its mistakes, and many adjustments have been necessary over the past three years.

Core evaluations have not always been conducted efficiently. Recently, some Boston schools had a backlog of 1,200 pending evaluations. The parents' appeal process through which parents can raise questions about their child's individual education plan, has been revised. The emphasis is now on mediation and conciliation prior to a complaint hearing. And there are still a couple of districts in the state which remain obstinately in non-compliance with the law. Suits and counter-suits are pending in the courts.

But when you ask people in Massachusetts what their experience with "766" can teach other states, the first thing you hear is that a special education law can work. In almost the same breath, people will add that such a law requires money, and over the long haul, it won't function properly unless it's adequately funded.

Robert Audette is now a private consultant, helping several other states comply with Federal Law 94-142. And the former head administrator of "766" in Massachusetts is already looking beyond present special education laws.

AUDETTE: Having finally put the whole thing in place, what I'm saying needs to begin to get torn down are the artificial barriers. Good special education administration, there's no such thing: good school administration, there is. You don't need, in my judgment, a special education administrator. You need a school committee and a superintendent and a number of lieutenants who manage a total system; and that system is reflective of the range of needs of children within that community. I guess I would be concerned that if we don't achieve some modicum of a next step within the next few years, we risk a rather significant backlash on the part of parents and educators of children who are not handicapped, who as a result of the "766s" of the world and the "94-142s" begin to feel that a disproportionate amount of school peoples' time and money is being given to too small a portion of the population.

LOOKER: For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, I'm Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts.

BLAIR: That's a grim vision: that because the money is scarce, parents may begin fighting among themselves, those with handicapped children against those with normal children. John Pittenger, until recently Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania, and now senior lecturer at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, suspects that there may be Individual Education Plans in everyone's future, and that means even more paperwork.

FUTURE PROBLEMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

PITTENGER: You sometimes hear enthusiasts in the field say -- both with respect to due process and the IEP, the Individual Education Program -- "Whoopee, once we have it established for handicapped kids, then the next step is to extend it to all kids"; and that you get this picture of an educational world in which each child's future is the result of an elaborately negotiated contract between the child, the teacher, the principal, heaven knows who else -- whatever specialists are involved -- with, of course, due process hearings and appeals to the courts, and so on. That strikes me as a wildly unrealistic view. Even if those sorts of things are desirable as to handicapped children -- and they

may be. I mean, I feel very... I think that a handicapped child who's totally excluded from the system, has a just cause of outrage. I think even that a handicapped child who is in a room that is simply a dumping ground for children, has an equal grounds for outrage.

But it's one thing to say those things, and it's quite a different thing to look forward to a world in which a young man or woman can go into court and claim that he or she has a right to German in the high school, because he wants to be a scientist, and German is more important to scientists, than French or, or Spanish. I would take about five seconds to throw that case out myself. These are things people have to think about before they welcome a regime in which every child's education is written out in detail, planned for it, and all those plans are ultimately cognizable in the courts.

LOOKER: Do you think that the IEP, as it's now constituted -- as far as handicapped children are concerned -- is the basis for... is a binding legal thing that's the basis for a law suit or something?

PITTENGER: Well, it shouldn't be, and the, the Senators and Representatives who passed this legislation have been quite clear in their minds in saying that it is not, that they said so in committee hearings and debates. But, you see that unfortunately, doesn't solve the problem; and I don't have very much difficulty foreseeing a day when a federal judge who wants to go down in history as a liberal and forward looking judge will say in a conference with his law clerk, "Well, I don't care what Senator Pell, or Representative Quie said on the floor of the House or Senate, this thing looks to me like a contract; and, furthermore, I think it's a jolly good thing that it be treated as a contract." Now that's going to have some very serious consequences. The teachers' unions are scared to death of the possibility that, that an IEP will be treated as an enforceable contractual agreement.

BLAIR: Former Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, John Pittenger, talking with reporter Tom Looker in Cambridge, Massachusetts recently.

MERROW: We said at the beginning that many of the arguments for "mainstreaming" are moral and ethical: it's going to make all of us better people.

BLAIR: But the arguments for Public Law 94-142 aren't moral or ethical, they're constitutional, and they're based on a long history of isolating and ignoring handicapped people. Those days are apparently over, even though the transition in the public schools and out of them, may be difficult, expensive, and troubling.

MERROW: We referred earlier to objections from state and local education officials who were -- and some still are -- upset about what they felt was excessive federal interference. There was even talk about not participating in "94-142," just saying "No thanks," and sending the money back to Washington. But that's no longer an option -- if it ever really was -- because of another law, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. That law makes it clear that states, towns, colleges, schools, anyone receiving federal funds, must make their facilities accessible and available to the handicapped, or lose all federal funds. Losing "94-142" money wouldn't be a big deal. Remember the law is only paying 5% of the cost in the first year. But losing all federal funds is a risk very few will be willing to take.

CONCLUSION

MERROW: Do kids make fun of you sometimes.

YOUNG GIRL: Yeah.

MERROW: What are they saying?

YOUNG GIRL: They sometimes call me a queer, and then they make fun of our class, cause we're in, in this classroom and they go, "You're in the dumb classroom," and they make fun of the teacher too.

MERROW: What do they say about your class?

YOUNG GIRL: They go, "Your class is a queer one, cause the kid, cause the kids in your class are dumb."

MERROW: What do you say when they say that.

YOUNG GIRL: I just tell em they're nice kids, and we like each other, and we like to play with each other.

MERROW: Maybe they really want to play with you.

YOUNG GIRL: Well, yeah, we don't now cause they pick up rocks and throw... they pick up rocks and then they throw them right at us. So we, now we just go over to the teacher and tell her they're throwing rocks at us.

MERROW: What would you like to do when you grow up?

YOUNG GIRL: I'd like to be a teacher, and work in a school, and help out, and help the kids that need help with their work. And when the kids need help, then I'm right there to help them.

* * *

MERROW: Material for this program came in part from John Watson, station WAMC, Albany, New York; Cathy Lewis, WXXI, Rochester, New York; Audrey Barton in San Francisco; Scott Simon in Chicago; and Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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BLAIR: If you'd like a transcript of this program on the education of handicapped children, send 50¢ to NPR--Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. A cassette costs \$5.00. Ask for Program No. 97.

MERROW: We also have a resource book about "94-142," the new law, prepared by the Institute for Educational Leadership. We have 1,000 copies, which we'll give away free, one to a person, until the supply runs out.

BLAIR: And, we also have free for the asking a guide to upcoming OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs.

MERROW: So, the transcript costs 50¢, a cassette costs \$5.00, the resource book is free, and the program guide is free.

BLAIR: That address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. And be sure to tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

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BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The Assistant Producer is Katharine Ferguson. David Selvin is the Acting Assistant Producer. Technical Assistance by Skip Pizzi.

* * *

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

* * *

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